

1-2019

ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials Plus [e-database review]

Kevin McDonough
Northern Michigan University, kmcdonou@nmu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.nmu.edu/facwork_bookreviews

Recommended Citation

McDonough, Kevin, "ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials Plus [e-database review]" (2019). *Book Reviews*. 48.

https://commons.nmu.edu/facwork_bookreviews/48

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the FacWorks at NMU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Book Reviews by an authorized administrator of NMU Commons. For more information, please contact kmcdonou@nmu.edu, bsarjean@nmu.edu.

CCA Review Template

The average review will be 1,500-3,000 words in length.

Title of Product or Resource: ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials PLUS
Product URL:

(If more than one, indicate each separately)

Author: Kevin McDonough

Author Affiliation: Electronic Services Librarian, Olson Library, Northern Michigan University, 1401 Presque Isle Avenue, Marquette, MI 49855

Email: kmcdonou@nmu.edu

Original Date of Review: 9/10/18

Date Last Updated: Only put a date here if the original review is being updated

Producer/Publisher/Vendor: American Theological Library Association

Address: 300 South Wacker Drive, Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606-6701 USA

Email: products@atla.com

Phone number(s): 888.665.ATLA (2852)

Producer URL: <https://www.EBSCO.com/products/research-databases/atla-religion-database-atlaserials-plus>

Free Text Keywords: Separate words or phrases with a vertical bar |

Primary Category (put an X in one box only):

	Art & Architecture
	Business & Economics
	Ethnic, Gender, and LGBTQ Studies
	General Reference
	Government Information
	History & Area Studies
	Humanities
	Language and Literature
	Library and Information Science (LIS)
	Medicine, Nursing & Health
	Multidisciplinary (or interdisciplinary)
	Music, Theater, Film Studies
X	Philosophy & Religion
	Political Science & Law
	Science, Technology, Computers, Engineering (including Environment)
	Sociology, Education, Anthropology, Psychology
	Other

Secondary Categories (put an X in as many boxes as apply):

	Art & Architecture
--	--------------------

	Business & Economics
	Ethnic, Gender, and LGBTQ Studies
	General Reference
	Government Information
	History & Area Studies
	Humanities
	Language and Literature
	Library and Information Science (LIS)
	Medicine, Nursing & Health
	Multidisciplinary (or interdisciplinary)
	Music, Theater, Film Studies
	Philosophy & Religion
	Political Science & Law
	Science, Technology, Computers, Engineering (including Environment)
	Sociology, Education, Anthropology, Psychology
	Other

Type of product being reviewed (put an X in as many boxes as apply):

x	Abstracting & Indexing
x	Aggregator database
	App for mobile devices
	Bibliographic tool
	Biography
	Blog or social media
	Data sets
	Discovery tool
	Image database
	Ebook collection
	Ejournal collection
	Encyclopedia/Handbook/Directory
	Library tool
	Newspaper or news source
	Primary source digital content
	Publisher or Organization content /repository
	Reports
	Software
	Statistical database
	Streaming video
	Website
	Other

Target Audience (Put an X in as many boxes as apply):

	Secondary
	General public
x	Undergraduate (including community colleges)
x	Graduate/Faculty/Researcher

Access (put an X in one box only)::

	Open Access (OA)
	Hybrid (some OA)
	One-time purchase
x	Subscription

Abstract

ATLA with ATLASerials Plus is a full text database covering literature related to religion. Coverage is deep and extensive, and EBSCO provides a highly functional search interface. Searching by the scripture field can be difficult, and access is made more accessible through a browsable scripture index. The quality of full text pdfs is fair to good, and doesn't equal the quality of articles available on publishers' websites. ATLA with ATLASerials Plus is most valuable to universities with strong and active religious studies programs or seminaries. For other educational institutions, web-scale discovery services will likely suffice. Selected topical searches in Ex Libris's Summon database were quite good at retrieving relevant religious content.

Pricing Options

EBSCO's media personnel no longer provide pricing information for reviews. Pricing for academic institutions is based on a variety of factors including but not limited to FTE, existing EBSCO databases, consortium agreements and/or buying groups. Contact EBSCO for a customized quotation for your specific library. Pricing is subject to change based on royalty requirements, etc.

The reviewer was able to secure a quote by contacting the EBSCO sales representative for his institution, a public university with approximately 6,700 FTEs and offering bachelors and masters programs. The reviewer's institution currently subscribe to other EBSCO databases, but the quoted price does not include any consortia discounts. As quoted, a subscription to ATLA and ATLASerials Plus is \$16,530. Less expensive options include subscribing to ATLASerials instead of the Plus version, which has 130 less full text titles, or only the A&I product, ATLA Religion Database.

Product Overview/Description

The ATLA Religion Database (ATLA) with ATLASerials Plus (ATLAS) is produced by the American Theological Library Association, but available only on EBSCOhost. Recently, the ATLA Catholic Periodical and Literature Index, a stand-alone Catholic specific product, was merged into ATLA. ATLA is the premier index to literature relating to religion, and includes over 1.1 million journal articles, 275,000 essay records, 920,000 book reviews, and 395,000 book records. A total of 2,250 journal titles are included, 960+ of which are currently indexed. Retroactive indexing has coverage going back to the late 1800s, but 85% of the journal titles

have a starting index after 1970, and only 5% have indexing before 1950. About 1,060, or 47% of the titles are indexed completely. The remaining titles have selective indexing, some focusing on complete article inclusion, but selective book reviews, and some being selective or occasional with one or both. Topic coverage includes the bible; archeology and antiquities; human culture and society; world religion and religious studies; church history, missions, and ecumenism; pastoral ministry; theology, philosophy, and ethics. ATLAS provides full text coverage for 450 titles in ATLA. A little less than 20% of the full text titles have embargos ranging from one month to five years. Some title are missing a few to several issues of full text coverage.

User Interface/Navigation/Searching

Searching is provided through EBSCOhost and the interface is standard for any EBSCO database. The basic search screen provides a single search box, and by clicking on “search options” a sub-screen appears, providing quick access to many of advanced search options without having to go to another screen <insert image 1>. Advanced searching provides more search boxes with a field selector next to each. Additional options beyond those available on the basic screen with “search options” open include requiring an abstract be available, restricting results to open access journals, limiting to a specific language, browsing by genre (e.g. church documents, diaries, eulogies, etc.), and excluding in-process records <insert image 2>. Searching by keywords is straight forward. Typing in “fruit of the spirit” (exact phrase search) retrieved results that were quickly filtered to “academic journals”, or the database’s terminology for articles. Other source types include reviews, essays, and books. Essays are typically chapters or sections within anthologies. Additional options for filtering include language, publication, and subject.

Searching by scripture can be tricky, especially for chapters where there is a part 1 and part 2, e.g. Corinthians. The format in which to search is not intuitive in these cases. Thankfully there is a scripture browse, where the chapters and verses are provided. Browsing to Corinthians, there is a 1st and 2nd. Expanding 1st provides a list of chapters, and doing the same for Chapter 6 reveals verses. Selecting verse 5 executes the search. Once you look at a record from one of the results you see the format for this verse: Corinthians, 1st 6:5. Unfortunately there is no way to search for only verse 5, and you will retrieve records discussing Corinthians, 1st 6:5 - 6:19, for example.

Viewing a record reveals the PDF, if part of ATLAS, and several tools native to the EBSCOhost interface <insert image 3>. A neat feature is the ability to connect to Google Drive and save your PDF there. Other common options are the ability to print, export a record in various bibliographic management software formats, save, and cite. Creating a personal account allows you to save records to folders and create and access notes. The quality of the pdfs is good to fair, with many suffering a lack of clarity <insert image 4>.

EBSCOhost has level A compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), and supports several features that are part of level AA compliance. Notable features include introductory text and shortcuts for screen reader users, elimination of most tables to improve searching with screen readers or keyboard controls, redesigned form controls for easier tab navigation, access keys support international keyboards functionality across multiple browsers, and detailed alternative text image descriptions. In addition, EBSCOhost meets, and in many cases exceeds, Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Standards.

Accessibility and usability have been incorporated in the EBSCOhost software development process. Key elements of the strategy include testing involves people who use assistive technology such as screen-reading software to interact with the computer, EBSCO quality assurance engineers use JAWS (e.g. Job Access With Speech) software, and EBSCO maintains relationships with several accessibility organizations that periodically consult, review and provide reports on the accessibility of new features added to the system.

Critical Evaluation

Evaluating ATLA with ATLAS is difficult. First ATLA is the only religious database that has significant depth and breadth of coverage, along with a commonly used interface, EBSCOhost. There are not any meaningful alternatives. When looking at the inclusion of top ranked religious journals, the reviewer turned to SCImago. SCImago is a journal ranking service, incorporated into Elsevier's product, Scopus, and a competitor to ISI's Journal Impact Factor. SCImago looks at the scientific influence of scholarly journals, considering the number of citations received by a journal and the importance or prestige of such journal. In a review of SCImago's top 100 religious studies journals as ranked by their h-index score, ATLA contained 87% of them, and the ones excluded were clearly peripheral to the focus of the database, ex. Renaissance Studies and Journal of Disability and Religion (Scimago Lab 2017).

EBSCOhost's interface is highly functional, and unlike Proquest's Religion Database has field searches unique to the subject content, e.g. scripture and papal/church document date, and a scripture lookup feature discussed earlier. For seminary schools or universities with a well-developed religious studies program, ATLA with ATLAS is likely a required resource. However, what about for everyone else? How does ATLA compare to a web-scale discovery tool? Thinking ATLA would have a greater likelihood of containing older content than ExLibris's Summon web-scale discovery tool, a search was run on "jesus" and "parables" in both but restricted to the date range of 1800-1970, and included additional filters of peer reviewed journals and articles. Although Summon retrieved almost twice as many results, 1,157 to 686, a quick review of some of the top results showed references available in ATLA that weren't in Summon, even if Summon indexed the same journal during the same time period. ATLA's indexing was more complete. Removing the date restriction widened the results found

between the two products, 11,961 to 734 in ATLA. However, web discovery tools search the full text of content and will retrieve more results simply from that, let alone the looseness of the search engine which returns results having only one of the search terms, particularly as you get further down in the results. That said there still is lot of religious content in the basic index of Summon to fulfill the needs of most users. As with many abstracting and indexing products, ATLA and ATLAS is meant for those users who need to see as much of the research literature as possible for a given subject. For everyone else, a web-scale discovery tool and mining references in articles (both backward and forward via Google Scholar, Web of Science, or Scopus) will likely suffice.

Competitive Products

As a religion database, nothing else compares in comprehensiveness and depth of coverage to ATLA and ATLASerials Plus. In addition, by being hosted on EBSCOhost ATLA provides a standard database interface familiar to most librarians. Proquest Religion database only has about 350 titles, of which 230+ are full text, and most of the indexing or full text coverage begins in the 1980s and 1990s. In addition, there is no specific field searching unique to religious literature. Religious and Theological Abstracts indexes 600 titles, but doesn't include the full text of any titles and has very rudimentary searching capabilities and is missing database features librarians have come to expect.

Purchase & Contract Provisions

A sample contract revealed no unusual provisions or terms of use. Users can download, print, or email limited copies of citations, abstracts, and full text for personal use provided the information is used solely in accordance with copyright law. Database records cannot be compiled for commercial purposes. Possibly relevant to some scholars is the statement "Downloading all or parts of [ATLA] in a systematic or regular manner so as to create a collection of materials comprising all or part of [ATLA] is strictly prohibited whether or not such collection is in electronic or print form." This restriction may be problematic to religious scholars who regularly use bibliographic management software like EndNote or Zotero to create personal libraries of references to religious literature. Libraries may use any full text content for Interlibrary Loan as long as such use is not prohibited in the copyright statement accompanying the article to be used, and libraries abide by copyright law. EBSCO prefers the content be faxed rather than provided electronically. Usage statistics are available through EBSCOadmin, and include common Counter reports. In addition, EBSCO makes a distinction between full text access native to the database and those from Linked Full Text link and any Custom Links. Linked Full Text directs patrons to another EBSCOhost database that has full text, or to full text in the library's electronic journal account. Both these actions are recorded as Smartlink on a library's statistics.

Authentication

EBSCOhost offers several different methods of authentication for users:

- IP Address
- Patterned IDs
- Patron ID files
- Referring URL
- User ID and Password
- Cookie Authentication
- Athens Authentication
- Shibboleth Authentication
- HTTPS Authentication
- Personal User Authentication
- Guest Access
- Embedded URL

Detailed description of each method can be found on their support page:

http://support.EBSCO.com/knowledge_base/detail.php?topic=999&id=3572&page=1

References

Scimago Lab. 2017. "Journal Rankings on Religious Studies." 2017.

https://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php?category=1212&order=h&ord=desc&page=1&total_size=432.

About the Author

Kevin McDonough has been a reference and electronic services librarian at Northern Michigan University since 1997.

Scoring

Please provide a numeric score between 1-5 (one being the lowest and 5 the highest). The score can be as granular as one-half point intervals (e.g. 3.5). Please avoid a perfect score of 5 in any category unless the product is virtually perfect with no room for improvement. If a product is open access please score the Pricing and Contract options as N/A (not applicable).

The composite score should be an arithmetic average of the four scoring categories.

Composite Score:	3.75	
-------------------------	------	--

Content:	4	Deep and comprehensive coverage, although much of the database consists of content since 1950.
User Interface/Searchability	5	EBSCOhost is a familiar interface that works well. Intuitive, and has features common to most modern search interfaces. Has field searches unique to ATLA. Nice ability to save to Google Drive.
Pricing	2	Price is high considering more powerful searching exists with web-scale discovery tools, along with deep coverage of religious literature. Pricing makes this product mostly for those institutions with large and productive religious study programs or seminaries.
Purchase/Contract Options	4	No notable exceptions. Terms are standard for most databases. Interlibrary loan allowed for full text content unless explicitly prohibited by a copyright statement in the article.

Special Instructions for Screenshots and Tables

Screenshots or other images may be included in a review if desired. Care should be taken not to include too many as they are more likely to be cut if space is needed in the final layout. The online version of the journal will show images in color but images in the printed version will be converted to grayscale.

- Please submit all screenshots in color
- Screenshots must be delivered as separate numbered image files in .jpg format
- Screenshots should be captured at the highest resolution available
- Place a numbered call out in the Word document where the image is to be inserted such as **<Insert Figure 3 here>**.
- Make sure that the separate .jpg images are given file names that correspond to the call-outs in the text

Tables (created by the author, not screen captures) may also be included in reviews.

- Use tabs to separate columns (NOT multiple spaces)

- Use paragraph returns to separate rows